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We begin this issue with the conclusion of a discussion of French colonial issues. This is followed by an expoloration of coins minted by the Papacy for the use of the impoverished.

In addition, we have added an auction for you to, peruse and hopefully find items for your collection.

As usual, all submissions welcome.

Joseph Uphoff

Editor

The French Colonial Stampee- Advancing the Narrative (Part 2)

David Wolfer NI#2793

Smooth Planchets vs Blank Planchets

Zay apparently came to his conclusions without testing the composition of different stampee types and varieties. Having identified observable differences between blank planchet stampees and the early regal stampees, he may have assumed that a changeover in design and planchet type had occurred at the mint in 1779. XRF evidence indicates that none of this is true.

Still, it is hard to fault Zay for his error in judgement. After all, the fact that old worn coins were used as hosts for regal stampees threw a particular complication into the visual assessment of these pieces and it wasn't just Zay who drew erroneous conclusions by what he saw.

Three authentic stampee types are known today; one countermarked with a 7mm Crowned C punch [Type 1], another countermarked with an 12mm Crowned C in depressed outline punch [Type 2], and a third type struck from dies with an 12mm Crowned C in relief [Type 3]. XRF testing shows that all three are struck from billon hosts.



Stampee, Type 1- 7mm Crowned C c/m on France Double Sol 1739, obv. & rev.



Stampee, Type 2- 12mm Crowned C c/m over sou marqué worn smooth, obv. & rev.



Stampee, Type 3- 12mm Crowned C stuck upon sou marqué with host details barely discernable on upper obverse rim, obv. & rev.

Since regal Type 1-3 stampees were struck over sous marqués that had sustained varying levels of wear, we occasionally find the stampee's Crowned C device sharing the field with residual embellishments of the original sou marqué. At other times, the Crowned C device stands alone in a field worn completely smooth. Ultimately, the determination of legitimacy for a smooth planchet variety rests on the ability to visually match a stampee's Crowned C design style with that of other authentic examples that still show evidence of host markings. This comparison is necessary due to the existence of the Birmingham (and other) contemporary counterfeits that attempted to mimic Type 3 stampees by including underlying host coin details in their design.

Vlack was the first to establish a separation of the larger 12mm stampee into two varieties; those struck over "genuine sous marqués" (pieces with host coin details present) and those struck "over a new blank planchet."¹ He must be commended for bringing an important stampee distinction to our attention- as two variations do indeed exist for this type- except that these early issue 12mm stampee countermarks were never struck on new blank planchets as Vlack states, only on old sous marqués that had been worn completely smooth from heavy circulation.

¹Vlack, pg. 140.

Unfortunately, Vlack carries this misconception forward when he describes the small (7mm) countermark, as follows:

The initial counterstamp consisted of a crowned C within a contoured indent. The stamping obviously damaged an already fragile coinage therefore the counterstamp design was modified in favor of a much smaller uncontoured crowned C, similar in style, but struck on new planchets, as illustrated in Mazard.²

Mazard does indeed provide a photographic plate showing the 7mm “petite” countermark struck on a blank planchet; however, as previously noted, the host planchet originated as a French billon coin that was subsequently worn smooth from use. As with the 12mm countermark, Vlack errs in claiming that the 7mm countermark was struck on new blank planchets. It will always be found countermarked on old French billon, of which some are worn completely smooth while others display varying amounts of host coin detail. This is easily verified by inspecting the Wood, Pridmore, Gadoury and Krause plates. In addition, Guilloteau provides confirmation of

²Vlack, pg. 139. This statement references the Vlack listing #373, pg. 140; “*Small crowned C over a new blank planchet.*”

this observation; “...avec + ou-de traces de la frappe originelle et au & semblable. (*“...with more or less remaining traces of the original stamp with the reverse side similar.”* - see Guilloteau listing #22).

Stampees struck with original Crowned C designs will always test positive for intrinsic silver. Zay’s newer style blank planchet stampees cannot offer this assurance. Over time, Vlack and other researchers appear to have blended the two dissimilar types together to create an alternative scenario comfortably supported by Zay’s fallacious idea that blank planchet billon stampees were officially produced.

Indigenous Resistance

The Edict of 1781 draws attention to France’s historic predisposition to use billon for colonial emissions, rather than base copper. An official promise to replace billon stampees and any other sous marqués still in circulation with the new Cayenne 2 sous at a 25% higher trade value not only exemplifies billon’s longstanding position as France’s preferential alloy for colonial currencies but also highlights, in this case, a strategic attempt by authorities to achieve compliance with the new ordinance. By enticing islanders to trade in their billon stampees for the new Cayenne 2 sous while at the same time ordering the stampee’s demonetization, base stampee counterfeits that

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remained in circulation would effectively be rendered worthless.

Unfortunately, official thinking shows a disconnect with regional realities. Since authentic stampees were never available in quantities sufficient to meet local demand, islanders had come to accept the fakes as a reasonable substitute for the official issue. This surrogacy was now thoroughly entrenched in the Caribbean monetary system; a fact of life that new legislation would never have the power to subjugate. French officials had failed to consider the obstinacy of the counterfeits relative to the lack of available small change.

Quite honestly, the average participant in local markets would have been unable to tell the difference between legitimate and false stampees. Merchants, however, knew the difference because real stampees, when packaged together in rolls of sixty, could be used in merchant-to-merchant transactions, tax payments, billon arbitrage, etc., where the fakes could not. Ever since the appearance of illicit stampees in the marketplace, authentic stampees were hoarded by merchants, to be replaced whenever possible with the base metal imposters. This is what drove good stampees out of circulation. Yet from an islander's perspective, the base stampee was still rated on par with a billon stampee and, as such, maintained a fiat valuation and perceived sense of worth simply by way of its conventional acceptance and usage. An administrative desire to replace the simplistic Crowned C coins with a

more elaborately designed Cayenne 2 sous was strong indeed; still, the indigenous population's need for a low-value currency, even when reduced to a mere token of its intrinsic worth, would ultimately prove stronger.

Even so, an idealistically conceived royal monetary policy moved forward anyway. Recalling all the base stampees in circulation would have been an expensive undertaking, not to mention an outright windfall for Birmingham counterfeiters, local merchants and corrupt civil servants. To protect against this possibility, bookkeeping requirements were clearly spelled out in the 1781 edict to assure a full accountability for any stampee received in trade for the new Cayenne 2 sous. We can therefore surmise that Cayenne authorities were careful not to accept fake stampees during the recall of 1781.

These legislative acts show an official awareness of how monetarily problematic the simplistic stampee design had become. But French administrators were soon destined to learn that reliance on the more elaborate design features of the Cayenne 2 sous would never be enough to dissuade its duplication. The resourcefulness of Birmingham forgers had the Cayenne 2 sous quickly following the same path previously travelled by the stampee; with base counterfeits once again driving the official billon coinage from circulation.

Modifying the Narrative

It is unfortunate Zay's premise has had such an inordinate effect on the stampee's recounting over the course of time. The numismatic community unconditionally acquiesced to his perceived authority on the subject by embracing the view that the French Mint created a new blank planchet stampee type in 1779. XRF data argues otherwise. After the stampee's initial release in 1763, another official emission of stampees was undoubtedly issued in 1779, but no empirical evidence suggests that [1] it was produced from new flans of either billon or base metal, [2] it included a design modification to the Crowned C motif, or that [3] supplies of worn sou marqué hosts were inadequate to complete the 1779 order.

The French Mint's decision to overstamp the Crowned C device on worn sous marqués would inadvertently combine with an influx of base stampees struck on blank planchets to create visual irregularities that were subsequently misconstrued by numismatists into the narrative currently accepted today. XRF evidence confirms a simpler story spelled out in contemporary French legislation, at least with regard to regal stampees. As far as the base copper stampees are concerned, simplicity is just not in the cards. All these years we believed the 'newer' blank planchet stampees to be authentic. Now, an understanding of their true composition effectively negates that thought. Yet they went on to trade extensively throughout the West Indies.

Along the way, they were even awarded official status in certain locales. As such, we cannot simply dismiss these base stampees from the region's numismatic history by labelling them contemporary counterfeits. With their quasi-official recognition well documented in various island statutes, base stampees enjoyed the distinction of being elevated to a much more respectable classification than simply contemporary counterfeits- a designation collectors of West Indian material should continue to find comforting.

Acknowledgement

As numismatists we would still be struggling to make sense of the French colonial stampee if not for the excellent translation work of the Zay and Mazard texts by my good friend Martine Dor. Many thanks for all your help, Martine!

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Appendix 1- Pictorial Listing of Sous Marqués with XRF Assays, 1640-1789



[1] Douzain ND(1592) c/m fleur-de-lis: Cu 56.11, Ag 38.43, Fe 0.33, Ni 0.11, Zn 2.84, Sn 0.97, Pb 1.21



[2] Double Sou of 1738-64: Cu 77.70, Ag 21.66, Cr 0.13, Fe 0.20, Ni 0.09, Pb 0.22



[3] Stampee Type 1: Cu 73.31, Ag 26.44, Ni 0.08 Fe 0.07, Pb 0.10



[4] Stampee Type 2: Cu 79.77, Ag 19.62, Fe 0.13, Pb 0.38

[5] Stampee Type 2: Cu 82.82, Ag 16.71, Fe 0.10, Ni 0.12, Pb 0.25

- [6] Stampee Type 2: Cu 80.80, Ag 18.56, Ni 0.12, Ir 0.14, Pb 0.38



- [7] Stampee Type 3: Cu 83.94, Ag 15.51, Fe 0.17, Ni 0.14, Pb 0.23

- [8] Stampee Type 3: Cu 75.37, Ag 24.05, Fe 0.10, Ni 0.19, Pb 0.29

- [9] Stampee Type 3: Cu 80.28, Ag 19.35, Fe 0.06, Ni, 0.07, Pb 0.24

- [10] Stampee Type 3: Cu 80.98, Ag 18.76, Pb 0.24, ***

- [11] Stampee Type 3: Cu 79.58, Ag 19.52, Fe 0.43, Ni 0.07, Pb 0.36

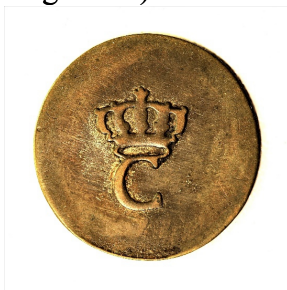


- [12] Stampee Type 3 Birm. Forgery: Cu 91.89, Zn 7.13, Fe 0.12, Ni 0.06

- [13] Stampee Type 3 Birm. Forgery: Cu 92.50, Zn 7.00, ***

- [14] Stampee Type 3 Birm. Forgery: Cu 92.27, Zn 6.17, Fe 0.22, Ni 0.14, Ir 0.80, Pb 0.39

- [15] Stampee Type 3 Birm. Forgery: Cu 91.87, Zn 6.46, Ag 0.85(wash), Fe 0.06, Ni 0.06, Pb 0.69
- [16] Stampee Type 3 Birm. Forgery: Cu 90.71, Zn 7.39, Fe 0.15, Ni 0.06, Ir 0.63, Pb 0.85
- [17] Stampee Type 3 Birm. Forgery: Cu 91.50, Zn 7.50, ***, Pb 0.50
- [18] Stampee Type 3 Birm. Forgery: Cu 92.21, Zn 6.43, Fe 0.19, Ni 0.08, Ir 0.72, Pb 0.37
- [19] Stampee Type 3 Birm. Forgery: Cu 91.14, Zn 7.33, Fe 0.11, Ni 0.07, *** (Tobago TBo c/m)
- [20] Stampee Type 3 Forgery: Cu 91.43, Zn 7.67, Fe 0.02, *** (Birm. CC dated 1749 + TBo c/m)
- [21] Stampee Type 3 Forgery: Cu 89.16, Zn 9.00, Ir 0.05, Pb 0.05 (Birm. CC dated 1749)
- [22] Stampee Type 3 Forgery: Cu 91.98, Zn 7.25, Fe 0.19, Ni 0.10 (Birm. CC dated 1769 + Tobago TBo)



- [23] Stampee Type 4: Cu 87.29, Zn 11.45, Fe 0.06, Ni 0.10, Pb 0.87
- [24] Stampee Type 4: Cu 87.58, Zn 11.53, Fe 0.81, Ni 0.08
- [25] Stampee Type 4: Cu 81.19, Zn 13.70, Fe 0.19, Ni 0.14, Si 4.0, Ir 0.77
- [26] Stampee Type 4: Cu 91.00, Zn 7.87, Fe 0.14, Ni 0.08, Ir 0.57
- [27] Stampee Type 4: Cu 87.21, Zn 11.97, ***, Pb 0.81

[28] Stampee Type 4: Cu 86.82, Zn 11.35, Fe 0.15, Ni 0.09, Cr 0.06

[29] Stampee Type 4: Cu 88.31, Zn 9.75, Fe 0.51, Ni 0.12, Ir 0.83

[30] Stampee Type 4: Cu 87.88, Zn 10.49, Fe 0.19, Ni 0.08, Ir 0.73 (Tobago TBo c/m)

[31] Stampee Type 4: Cu 89.15, Zn 0.82, Fe 0.09, Ir 0.84, Al 6.90, Si 1.90 (Tortola T c/m)

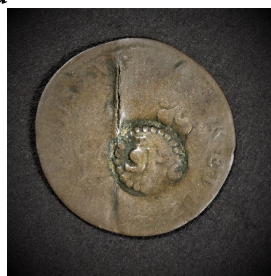
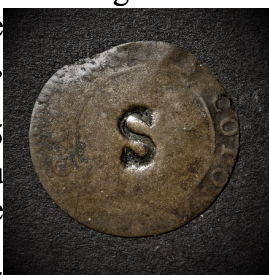
[32] Stampee Type 4: Cu 90.40, Zn 8.41, Fe 0.23, Ni 0.10, Ir 0.60



[33] Stampee Type 5 'Floating Crown': Cu 94.84, Zn 3.71, Fe 0.07, Ag 0.51(wash), Ni 0.05

[34] Stampee Type 5 'Floating Crown': Cu 91.20, Zn 6.86, Fe 0.16, Ni 0.06, Ir 0.76, Pb 0.96

[35] Stampee Type 5 'Floating Crown': Cu 96.26, Zn 2.51, Fe 0.11, Ni 0.46, ***



[36] Stampee Type 5 'Floating Crown': Cu 92.07, Zn 6.24, Fe 0.27, Ni 0.08, Ir 0.67, Pb 0.67

[37] Stampee Type 5 'Floating Crown': Cu 92.05, Zn 6.53, Fe 0.23, Ag 0.41(wash), Ni 0.09, Pb 0.56



[38] Auth. Cayenne 2 sous: Cu 81.43, Ag 17.13, Fe 0.31, Ni 0.15, Se 0.42, Pb 0.55 (NEVIS c/m)

[39] Auth. Cayenne 2 sous: Cu 77.76, Ag 21.49, Fe 0.10, Ni 0.07, Pb 0.57 (St. Kitts S c/m)

[40] Auth. Cayenne 2 sous: Cu 80.50, Ag 19.29, Fe 0.07, Ni 0.12, Pb 0.02 (St. Martin StM c/m)



[41] Cayenne 2 sous CC: Cu 90.33, Zn 8.95, Fe 0.11, Ni 0.11, Pb 0.50

[42] Cayenne 2 sous CC: Cu 90.50, Al 6.90, Si 1.68, Sn 0.30, Fe 0.05, Ge 0.57

[43] Cayenne 2 sous CC: Cu 95.34, Zn 3.43, Fe 0.24, Ir 0.52, Bi 0.16

- [44] Cayenne 2 sous CC: Cu 91.85, Zn 6.40, Ag 0.49, Fe 0.19, Ir 0.56, Ge 0.10
- [45] Cayenne 2 sous CC: Cu 93.35, Zn 6.17, Fe 0.17, Bi 0.11, Pb 0.20 (Montserrat **M** c/m)
- [46] Cayenne 2 sous CC: Cu 96.20, Zn 1.25, Fe 0.64, Ir 0.83, Bi 0.35, Pb 0.72 (Montserrat **M** c/m)
- [47] Cayenne 2 sous CC: Cu 93.05, Zn 6.22, Ir 0.16, Bi 0.22, Pb 0.35 (St. Eustatius **SE** c/m)
- [48] Cayenne 2 sous CC: Cu 90.13, Zn 8.03, Fe 0.17, Ni 0.08, Ir 0.83 (St. Eustatius **SE/P** c/m)
- [49] Cayenne 2 sous CC: Cu 89.43, Zn 8.63, Fe 0.19, Ni 0.09, Ir 0.97 (Tobago small **TBo** c/m)
- [50] Cayenne 2 sous CC: Cu 93.92, Zn 4.66, Fe 0.11, Ni 0.07, Ir 0.78, Pb 0.36 (Tobago small **TBo** c/m)
- [51] Cayenne 2 sous CC: Cu 87.16, Zn 10.9, Fe 0.18, Ni 0.08, *** (Tobago small **TBo** c/m)
- [52] Cayenne 2 sous CC: Cu 91.18, Zn 7.90, Fe 0.15, Ni 0.10, Pb 0.66 (Tobago **TB** c/m)
- [53] Cayenne 2 sous CC: Cu 93.38, Zn 4.96, Fe 0.11, Ni 0.06, Ir 1.03, Pb 0.24 (Tobago large **TBo** c/m)
- [54] Cayenne 2 sous CC: Cu 91.35, Zn 6.66, Ni 0.07, Ir 0.95, Bi 0.22 Pb 0.47 (Tobago large **TBo** c/m)
- [55] Cayenne 2 sous CC: Cu 91.81, Zn 6.28, Ni 0.12, Ir 0.99, Pb 0.48 (Tortola **T** c/m)

Note- Tallies totaling less the 100% are attributable to trace elements that were either too low or uncalibrated to register a readout on the XRF device. * designates a data transcription error.**

COINS FOR THE POOR; THE LATERAN ISSUES OF THE POPES

Robert Ronus LM#139

I recently came across a small Papal coin of a type I had never seen before. It is a grosso of Pope Alexander VIII (1689-91). Here is a detailed description:

Obv.: ALEXANDER
_ _ VIII. PONT.M.



Tiara and keys
over Ottoboni family
arms (double eagle
& curved diagonal bar, divided horizontally)

Rev.: SACR.S/ BASILIC/ LATERAN/ ./ POSSESS (possessor of
the Holy Lateran Basilica)/ 1689 in palm wreath



AR. 20mm 1.28
g Berman 2184.
CNI XVI,p. 468,3
(Tav.XXXIII,27).
Munt.28. KM.486.

A little research revealed that such coins are called Lateran issues and are related to the ancient ceremony of new popes taking

possession of the Archbasilica of St. John Lateran, the cathedral of the bishops of Rome.

The original Saint John Lateran church was built on the Caelian Hill (one of the seven Hills of Rome) on land that was owned by the Laterani, a wealthy Roman family that fell in disgrace under emperor Nero in the first century, and eventually came into the hands of a certain Fausta, who was the second wife of emperor Constantine (280-337). He freed Christianity and other religions from persecution under the edict of Milan in 313 and later donated Fausta's land to Pope Melchiades (also known as Miltiades). From that time all the popes occupied the Lateran Palace until the French Pope Clement V, who moved to Avignon in France in 1309. The Basilica was consecrated in 318 and, converted and extended, eventually became the Cathedral of Rome, the seat of the Popes as the Bishops of Rome. The church, which has the full name of *Major Papal, Patriarchal and Roman Archbasilica Cathedral of the Most Holy Savior and Saints John the Baptist and the Evangelist in Lateran*, was defined as the *Mater* and *Caput* (mother and head) of all churches in Rome and throughout the world.

In later centuries the basilica and palace fell into disrepair and were then rebuilt. The façade as it appears today was completed in 1735.



Façade

Archbasilica of Saint John Lateran - Wikipedia



Main body of the basilica, after the radical transformation by [Francesco Borromini](#).

Archbasilica of Saint John Lateran - Wikipedia



The papal *cathedra*, the presence of which renders the archbasilica the cathedral of Rome, is located in its apse.

At some point it became the custom for a new pope to make a formal procession to St. John Lateran and take possession of the cathedral as Bishop of Rome.

Here is a description by J.L Meagher, writing in 1891:

"In former times after a late breakfast, the pope started for his cathedral on horseback, followed by all the officials of church and state, all riding with him in a most striking procession.

In our day the pope is carried in a sedan chair in procession from the Vatican to the Lateran Basilica. At its portals the Cardinal archpriest offers him a golden cross, which he kisses. Then he receives the homage of all the clergy of his cathedral. Now the archpriest presents him with the keys of the church, one of gold, the other is silver and then he reads him an address. The vast

procession then enters the church and proceeds to the council hall. The pope then gives to each a medal struck in memory of the event. From the balcony of the church he blesses all the people, money is scattered among them, and then he returns again to his great palace at the Vatican"

Money is scattered among them! Here is the purpose of our coin. Alexander VIII had them struck specially for distribution to the people at the end of the ceremony, which took place on October 23 1689. Apart from our grosso, he struck a giulio and two varieties of 1/2 grossi. He also struck another variety of our grosso with the reverse inscription inside a cartouche rather than a palm wreath. All are minor coins of low value. There was a limit to the generosity he could afford to show to the people.

The custom of a new pope taking possession of St. John Lateran, his cathedral church, continues to this day. Here is an old photo of Pope Pius XII being carried across Vatican Square by twelve footmen on the *Sedia gestatoria*, a portable throne, on his way to the basilica on May 25, 1939.



On April 7 2013 Pope Francis made the 2 1/2 mile journey from the Vatican to take possession of Saint John Lateran. You can watch it on You Tube, although it appears to be abbreviated so I do not know for sure if he distributed any money to the people. It is not mentioned so I assume not. He arrived not on a horse nor a portable throne but standing up in a Popemobile. He was greeted by the clergy but I saw no cross to kiss nor the offering of any keys. Things aren't what they used to be! You can read his Homily on the internet.

Even in the days when popes distributed coins, not all popes struck special issues. In addition to Alexander VIII, the ones that did were Clement IX (1667), Clement X (1670), Innocent XI (1676), Innocent XII (1692), Clement XI (1701), Innocent XIII (1721), Benedict XIII (1724), Clement XII (1730), Benedict XIV (1741), Clement XIII (1758), Pius VI (1775) and Pius VII (1801).

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